

Message Text

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ACTION EA-06

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FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6234

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 VIENTIANE 0667

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LA, TH, US

SUBJECT: CALL ON FOREIGN MINISTER REGARDING LAO

ACCUSATIONS THAT U.S. REVIVING WAR IN LAOS

REF A VIENTIANE 0577, B STATE 057870

SUMMARY. I SAW FOREIGN MINISTER PHOUANE SIPRASEUTH SUNDAY, MARCH 14, TO REVIEW AND DENY ACCUSATIONS TO THE EFFECT THAT THE UNITED STATES WAS REVIVING THE WAR IN LAOS AND TRYING TO UNDERMINE THE NEW LAO REGIME.

I REVIEWED THE PRESIDENT'S AND SECRETARY'S STATEMENTS ON OUR DESIRE TO LOOK AHEAD RATHER THAN BACK IN OUR RELATIONS WITH THE FORMER INDOCHINA STATES AND OUR DECLARATION OF READINESS TO MAINTAIN RELATIONS WITH THE NEW REGIME IN LAOS ACCORDING TO INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS FOR THE CONDUCT OF RELATIONS BETWEEN STATES.

I SUGGESTED THAT REPETITION OF UNFOUNDED CHARGES OF HOSTILE ACTIONS BY THE UNITED STATES TENDED TO BRING INTO QUESTION ASSURANCES THE LAO HAD GIVEN US OF THEIR INTEREST IN MAINTENANCE OF GOOD RELATIONS. I INVITED ANY SPECIFIC COMPLAINTS OR CONCRETE EVIDENCE THEY MIGHT HAVE TO SUPPORT THE CHARGES MADE, WHICH I DESCRIBED AS

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TOTALLY UNFOUNDED. PHOUANE TOOK THE HARD LINE THAT THE

CHARGES WERE WELL FOUNDED, DENOUNCED THE THAI GOVERNMENT AS BEHIND ALL ANTI-REGIME ACTIONS IN LAOS AND SUGGESTED THAT "CIA SUPPORT" OF THE THAI "COULD NOT BE EXCLUDED." HE SAID HE COULD TALK FURTHER AFTER HIS RETURN FROM PEKING. ALTHOUGH WE MAY GET A COUNTER BLAST FROM THE LAO, WE THINK WE HAVE MADE OUR POINT ABOUT THE BASELESSNESS OF THEIR CHARGES WITHOUT CAUSING ANY LOSS OF FACE. END SUMMARY.

1. FOREIGN MINISTER PHOUNE SIPRASEUTH RECEIVED ME AT 1700 HOURS SUNDAY, MARCH 14. CHEF DE CABINET SOUBANH SRITH-IRATH WAS PRESENT AND ACTED AS FRENCH/LAO INTERPRETER (PHOUNE LISTENED IN FRENCH BUT REPLIED IN LAO). THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME PHOUNE HAD EVER USED AN INTERPRETER WITH ME AND INDICATED, I BELIEVE, A LITTLE UNCERTAINTY ON HIS PART ABOUT WHAT I WAS GOING TO BRING UP. HE WAS FRIENDLY AND COURTESOUS AS USUAL.

2. I STARTED BY READING AN INFORMAL, UNHEADED, UNSIGNED, UNDATED TALKING PAPER IN FRENCH, WHICH I SUBSEQUENTLY LEFT WITH PHOUNE, RECAPITULATING THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

A. MY CONVERSATION WITH KAYSONE PHOMVIHANE JANUARY 3 IN WHICH I HAD ASSURED HIM THAT THE QUESTION OF SUPPORT BY US TO ANY TRAITOROUS ACTION AGAINST LAOS DID NOT ARISE.

B. THE REPORT OF THE JANUARY 31 - FEBRUARY 1 CABINET MEETING ACCUSING CIA OF CREATING DIFFICULTIES, ETC.

C. THE PASSAGE IN KAYSONE'S SPEECH TO THE SOVIET PARTY CONGRESS ACCUSING "AMERICAN IMPERIALISM OF CONTINUING SUBVERSIVE ACTIONS" AGAINST LAOS.

D. THE LONG RADIO VIENTIANE COMMENTARY OF MARCH 3 ACCUSING US OF "AGAIN EMERGING TO DIRECT THE WAR IN LAOS, ETC.", IN CONSIDERABLE DETAIL.

3. I CONTINUED READYING THE PAPER ASSURING PHOUNE THAT WE WERE NOT ENGAGING IN ANY SUCH ACTIVITIES AND MAKING THE FOLLOWING FURTHER POINTS:

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A. THE UNITED STATES, AS SECRETARY KISSINGER AND PRESIDENT FORD HAD BOTH SAID, LOOKED TO THE FUTURE RATHER THAN TO THE PAST IN OUR RELATIONS WITH THE STATES OF THE FORMER INDOCHINA. WE WERE NOT TRYING TO UNDO THE CHANGES WHICH HAD TAKEN PLACE IN LAOS OVER THE LAST YEAR. SPECIFICALLY, WE WERE NOT ENCOURAGING NOR SUPPORTING RESISTANCE ELEMENTS AND WE WERE NOT URGING ANY

COUNTRY TO TAKE ECONOMIC MEASURES AGAINST LAOS.

B. AS WE HAD INDICATED IN OUR STATEMENT OF DECEMBER 6 AT THE TIME OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF LAOS, WE WERE PREPARED TO MAINTAIN RELATIONS WITH THE NEW REGIME IN LAOS ACCORDING TO INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS FOR THE CONDUCT OF RELATIONS BETWEEN STATES.

C. CHARGES THAT THE UNITED STATES WAS TRYING TO UNDERMINE THE NEW REGIME WERE UNFOUNDED. THE REPEITION OF SUCH CHARGES TENDED TO CALL INTO QUESTION THE ASSURANCES WE HAD HAD OF LAO INTEREST IN THE MAINTAINENCE OF GOOD RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES AND THIS REITERATION SERVED NO USEFUL PURPOSE.

D. SHOULD THE MINISTRY HAVE A SPECIFIC COMPLAINT ABOUT THE CONDUCT OF RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES OR ANY EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE CHARGES MADE BY RADIO VIENTIANE, FOR EXAMPLE, I WOULD APPRECIATE HAVING THEM.

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E. MEANWHILE I HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED TO ASSURE THE FOREIGN MINISTRY THAT THESE REPEATED ACCUSATIONS OF HOSTILE INTENT ON OUR PART AGAINST THE LAO REGIME WERE TOALLY

UNFOUNDED.

4. PHOUNE, IN REPLY, MADE THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

A. HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT THE CHARGES MADE HAD BEEN WELL FOUNDED. EVERYTHING IN THEM WAS BASED ON REALITY.

B. HE ASKED ME TO INFORM MY GOVERNMENT OF WHAT HE TOLD ME SO THAT THE AIMS OF BOTH GOVERNMENTS COULD BE ACHIEVED.

C. HE WANTED ME TO REPORT THAT ALL THAT WAS BEING DONE AGAINST THE LAO REGIME WAS BEING SUPPORTED BY THE THAI GOVERNMENT AND "IT WAS INEVITABLE THAT THE SUPPORT OF CIA COULD NOT BE EXCLUDED."

D. THAT WAS ALL HE HAD TO SAY FOR THE MOMENT AND WE COULD TALK AGAIN AFTER HE HAD HAD A CHANCE TO READ MY INFORMAL TALKING PAPER. (HE WAS LEAVING FOR PEKING THE NEXT MORNING.)

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5. HOWEVER, PHOUNE THEN WENT ON TO REMARK THAT PUBLIC OPINION FELT THAT THE REACTIONARIES WERE MOUNTING THEIR ACTIVITIES WITH FOREIGN SUPPORT AND HE HOPED THAT I WOULD DO ALL I COULD TO MAKE MY GOVERNMENT UNDERSTAND THIS. THE LAO PEOPLE WERE VERY HAPPY THE WAR WAS OVER. THE UNITED STATES HAD ITS PART TO CONTRIBUTE TO PEACE. EVEN THOUGH PEACE WAS BEING CONSOLIDATED, THERE WERE DIFFICULTIES. THAI PROVOCATIONS, INCLUDING THE UNILATERAL CLOSING OF THE FRONTIER, WERE A FACTOR IN THESE DIFFICULTIES. THESE WERE THE DIFFICULTIES AT PRESENT BUT THE LAO WERE SURE OF OVERCOMING THEM BECAUSE THEY HAD OVERCOME WORSE ONES IN THE PAST. HE CONCLUDED WITH THE RATHER VAGUE OBSERVATION THAT IF THE UNITED STATES WAS SINCERE IN WANTING TO MAINTAIN GOOD RELATIONS THE LAO HOPED FOR CONCRETE ACTIONS SO THAT PEACE IN LAOS COULD BE CONSOLIDATED.

6. I REITERATED THE PARAGRAPH IN THE TALKING PAPER WHICH NOTED I WOULD APPRECIATE HAVING ANY SPECIFIC COMPLAINT OR EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE CHARGES THAT HAD BEEN MADE.

7. FINALLY, PHOUNE SAID THAT HE WAS GLAD TO SEE ME, THAT HE KNEW I HAD MY DUTY TO DO, THAT WE HAD NOT HAD T TALK IN A LONG TIME AND THAT KHAMPHAY BOUPHA WOULD BE IN CHARGE DURING HIS ABSENCE IN PEKING.

8. COMMENT: WE MAY GET A COUNTER BLAST EITHER IN ANOTHER MEETING WITH PHOUNE OR SOMEONE ELSE IN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY OF IN THE "LAO INFORMATION ORGANS."

HOWEVER, I BELIEVE WE GOT ACROSS THE MESSAGE WE WANTED TO GET ACROSS
WITHOUT CAUSING ANYBODY TO LOSE ANY FACE.
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